CLAIMS

1. A method comprising:

receiving a request to connect to a public instant message (IM) service;

determining that the request is from a user associated with a particular domain; and

redirecting the request to an IM gateway server that is associated with the domain.

2. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the determining comprises:

identifying a user ID associated with the request;

determining a domain associated with the user ID; and

determining that requests for connections to the public IM service from users associated with the domain are to be redirected.

3. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the redirecting comprises:

determining a redirection address associated with the domain, the redirection address being associated with the IM gateway server; and

transmitting a transfer command to a client application from which the request was received, the transfer command indicating the redirection address to which the request is to be submitted.

4. The method as recited in claim 3 wherein the redirection address comprises at least one of an IP address and a domain name.

5. The method as recited in claim 4 wherein the redirection address further comprises a port number.

6. The method as recited in claim 1 further comprising:

receiving another request to connect to the public IM service, the request being from the user and including an identifier that indicates that the request is being submitted from an IM gateway server that is associated with the domain; and

establishing through the IM gateway server, a connection between the public IM service and the user.

7. The method as recited in claim 6 further comprising:

receiving instant message communications from the user through the IM gateway server; and

transmitting instant message communications directed to the user to the IM gateway server.

8. One or more computer-readable media having computer-readable instructions thereon which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to implement the method as recited in claim 1.

9. A method comprising:

receiving a request to connect to a public instant message (IM) service;

determining that the request is being received from a client application through an IM gateway server;

authenticating the IM gateway server;

authenticating the client application; and

establishing a connection between the public IM service and the client application through the IM gateway server.

10. The method as recited in claim 9 further comprising:

receiving an IM communication directed to the client application; and

transmitting the IM communication to the IM gateway server.

11. A method comprising:

receiving at a gateway server, a public instant message (IM) service connection request from a user;

verifying that the user is authorized to access the gateway server;

modifying the public IM service connection request to include data that identifies the gateway server; and

forwarding the public IM service connection request to a public IM service.

12. The method as recited in claim 11 further comprising, verifying that the user is authorized to participate in public IM communications.

13. The method as recited in claim 12 wherein the verifying comprises examining data stored in an enterprise policy and configuration data store.

14. The method as recited in claim 11 further comprising:

determining whether the user is authorized to participate in point-to-point communications as may be enabled through the public IM service; and

in an event that the user is not authorized to participate in point-to-point communications, altering the connection request to include data that indicates that the user is not authorized to participate in point-to-point communications through the public IM service.

15. A system comprising:

a public instant message service configured to enable public instant message communications between two or more users; and

an enterprise-specific data log configured to store data associated with public instant message communications directed to or from a user associated with a particular enterprise.

16. The system as recited in claim 15 wherein the public instant message service comprises:

(A) an instant message connect domain store configured to store domain names that identify domains for which instant message service connection requests are to be redirected; and

(B) a dispatch server configured to:

(i) receive a connection request from a user through an instant message client application;

(ii) determine whether the connection request is being received from an instant message gateway server;

(iii) in an event that the connection request is not being received from an instant message gateway server, determine whether the connection request is from a user associated with a domain identified in the instant message connect domain store; and

(iii) in an event that the connection request is from a user associated with a domain identified in the instant message connect domain store, issuing a transfer command to the instant message client application, the transfer command including a redirection address.

17. The system as recited in claim 16 wherein the instant message connect domain store is configured to store at least one of a domain name, an instant message connect enabled indicator, a transfer IP address, a transfer domain name, a port number, a managed namespace authorization enabled indicator, and an instant messaging ID/Key pair.

18. The system as recited in claim 16 wherein the public instant message service further comprises:

a connection server configured to establish and maintain a connection between the instant message service system and the user through an instant message gateway server.

19. The system as recited in claim 16 wherein the public instant message service further comprises:

a switchboard server configured to route instant message communication data received from and directed to the user.

20. The system as recited in claim 15 wherein the enterprise-specific data log is implemented as a component of the public instant message service.

21. The system as recited in claim 15 wherein the enterprise-specific data log is implemented as a component of an enterprise network that is separate from the public instant message service.

22. The system as recited in claim 15 wherein the enterprise-specific data log is implemented as at least one of a database, one or more XML files, and one or more text files.

23. The system as recited in claim 15 further comprising:

an enterprise instant message gateway server configured to manage public instant message conversations in which an enterprise user participates.

24. The system as recited in claim 23 wherein the public instant message service is further configured to verify that the gateway server is a valid gateway server associated with an enterprise with which the user is associated.

25. The system as recited in claim 23 wherein the enterprise instant message gateway server is further configured to:

request a connection to the public instant message service on behalf of the enterprise user; and

route instant message conversation data between the public instant message service and the enterprise user.

26. The system as recited in claim 23 wherein the enterprise instant message gateway server is further configured to generate a log of the instant message conversation data.

27.   The system as recited in claim 23 further comprising:

a second enterprise instant message gateway server, geographically distributed from the other enterprise instant message gateway server, the second enterprise instant message gateway server also configured to manage public instant message conversations in which an enterprise user participates; and

an enterprise routing service configured to route a connection request from the user to the enterprise instant message gateway server or to the second enterprise instant message gateway server.

28.   The system as recited in claim 27 wherein the enterprise routing service is further configured to determine whether to route the connection request from the user to the enterprise instant message gateway server or to the second enterprise instant message gateway server based on data that identifies a geographical location associated with the user.

29.   The system as recited in claim 23 further comprising a policy and configuration data store configured to maintain data that identifies enterprise policies to be applied when the enterprise user requests a connection to the public instant message service.

30. One or more computer-readable media comprising computer-readable instructions which, when executed, cause a computer system to:

receive a connection request directed to a public instant message service;

determine whether the connection request is being received through an instant message gateway server; and

in an event that the connection request is being received through an instant message gateway server:

authenticate an identity of the instant message gateway server;

authenticate an identity of a client application through which a user submitted the connection request; and

establish a connection with between the public instant message service and the user through the instant message gateway server.

31. The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 30, further comprising computer-readable instructions which, when executed, cause the computer system to:

in an event that the connection request is not being received through an instant message gateway server, determine whether the user is associated with a domain for which connection requests are to redirected;

in an event that the user is associated with a domain for which connection requests are to be redirected, redirect the connection request to an instant message gateway server associated with the domain.

32.   The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 31, further comprising computer-readable instructions which, when executed, cause the computer system to:

in an event that the user is not associated with a domain for which connection request are to be redirected, determine whether the user is associated with a domain for which connection requests are to be denied; and

in an event that the user is associated with a domain for which connection requests are to be denied, deny the connection request.

33.   The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 32, further comprising computer-readable instructions which, when executed, cause the computer system to:

in an event that the user is not associated with a domain for which connection requests are to be denied:

authenticate an identity of the client application through which the user submitted the connection request; and

establish a connection between the user and the public instant message service.